

A
DISCOURSE,

Shewing that the
Yoke of our Lord *JESUS CHRIST*

Is easier than the
Yoke of SIN, or the Old Man within us;

AND

That wicked Men meet with more Trouble, and encounter greater Hardships in going to Hell, than good People in the Way that leadeth unto Heaven.

By *B. REGIS, D.D.*
Rector of *Adisbam* in *Kent*, Canon of *Windsor*, and
Chaplain in Ordinary to HIS MAJESTY.

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Δυσκολώτερον ἢ κακία τῆς ἀρετῆς. CHRYS.
*Asperam & insuavem virtutum viam vitiorum consuetudo facit, quæ si in
alteram partem transferatur, inveniatur levis justitiæ semita.* HIER.

L O N D O N:

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near *West-Smithfield*. M.DCC.LIII.



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DISCOURSE,

Shewing that the

Yoke of our Lord *Jesus Christ*

Is easier than the

Yoke of SIN, &c.

SECTION I.

That a medium must be kept betwixt the two extremes men run upon, with regard to the Christian Religion.



MOST men run upon two extremes with regard to the Christian Religion. There are many that fancy it requires only the performance of a few duties, and of some outward acts of piety. They persuade themselves, that Jesus Christ has done all that was necessary for their salvation; that he has atoned for

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our sins, pulled out the sting of death, obtained by his merits the promises of our resurrection in glory, and purchased unto us the kingdom of heaven, with its supreme good: and so they flatter themselves, that if they do but go now and then to church, and wish, though faintly, for heaven, and give some alms to the poor, and keep themselves from committing enormous crimes, they certainly will be saved, and enjoy after death a supreme felicity.

A great many others imagine, that the Christian Religion is extremely strict, severe, and rigorous; full of difficulties, abounding with crosses, attended with sadness, inconsistent with the happiness of this life, opposite to all manner of pleasures, and contrary to the bent of our nature. Its precepts to renounce the world, to deny one's self, to forsake father, mother, wife, children, and to part with all the sweets of this life, for the glory of God; to take up the cross, to mortify the flesh, to undergo many afflictions, and even to die for the service of Jesus Christ; these precepts startle their self-love, which represents them impracticable: wherefore they conclude, that it is in vain for them to pretend to perform what they require of us: and that conclusion disposes them to give ear to any objection, that may be disadvantageous to the revealed Religion, as well as to cherish all the prejudices possible against, and to entertain all the disadvantageous thoughts they can of it. Afterward they are easily persuaded, by their corrupt heart, to look upon it as priest-craft, and a cheat.

Thus do these two sorts of people meet, tho they take two different courses; for they both neglect the revealed religion, which is the only means to be happy, both in this life and in the next: wherefore my design is to do my best endeavours, in order to convince them both, that

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the Yoke of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

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those who keep a medium betwixt the two extremes mentioned, understand best the nature of the Christian Religion, are the wisest, and make the best use of their reason.

The chief preacher, the author, the founder, the origin of our holy religion, I mean Jesus Christ, the everlasting truth, who from heaven brought that religion, and who perfectly understood its nature, tells us, that *his yoke is easy, and his burden is light*. Now, that by these figurative expressions of yoke and burden, are meant the holy gospel, the doctrine, the dominion, the service, the precepts of Jesus Christ, is, I think, beyond all dispute: and it may be seen in 1 Pet. ii. 3.

Rom. ii. 4. that the word of the original rendered *easy*, signifies also gracious, good, benign. And so the meaning of these words, *My yoke is easy, and my burden is light*, must be this: my religion, my empire, my discipline, my injunctions, are supportable, gentle, kind, profitable, feasible, and bountiful. But after all, Religion is a yoke and a burden: which confutes the people who wrongfully think, that it requires little or nothing; but it is not an intolerable yoke, as that of the law, nor a grievous burden, as the ceremonies of false religions are: on the contrary, it is an easy yoke and a light burden, which shews the error of those who look upon it as extremely rigid and severe.

Men must be under the yoke and the burden, either of sin and vice, or of Jesus Christ and virtue; there is no avoiding it. Now we Christians have this unspeakable advantage over the rest of mankind, that it is in our power to shake off the hurtful, galling, disgraceful, and destructive yoke and burden of sin and vice; and to bear the easy, useful, excellent and honourable yoke and burden of Jesus Christ and virtue: where-

Κύριος
Χεῖρς,
The Lord is
gracious.
Χρηστὸν τοῦ
θεοῦ.

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fore, if we can but be entirely satisfied which is the most tolerable, the easiest, the most advantageous, and the pleasanter, our self-interest, and our self-love, will surely persuade and induce us to submit to that yoke, even to revere it. Now, my design is to convince my readers, (at least to endeavour it) that the yoke and burden of Jesus Christ and virtue, are incomparably more supportable, more gentle, more profitable, and more delightful, than the yoke of sin and vice; but before that, I must shew you the vast difference there is betwixt the yoke of the Law, and the yoke of the Gospel.

S E C T. II.

The difference betwixt the yoke of the Law, and the yoke of the Gospel.

THE mosaical law was very pompous, extremely lofty, and most domineering. It set out all the rights God has over men, and exacted rigorously what was due to him. It was exceedingly strict and severe, for it oppressed them with abundance of statutes about feasts, sabbaths, and cleansings; about blood, and the distinctions of beasts; about the entering into the congregation, the first-born, the tithes, the firstlings, the expiation of an unknown murder; and about many other things: it compelled them to make a vast number of sacrifices of divers kinds; and it made them sink under the burden of a vast many rites and ceremonies. In short, it was so full of ordinances, that the performing of them was looked upon by an apostle, as a yoke insupportable; for *St Peter*, in the first council of

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the Christian church, speaking of that yoke, said,
Neither our fathers, nor we, were able to bear it. Acts xv. 10.
I may add, that though the law prescribed so
many things, upon pain either of death, or of
curse, or of some other great punishment; yet
it did not afford the least assistance towards the
performance of them. It was indeed full of pre-
cepts, statutes, and ordinances, but no help was
to be expected from it; and, which was very de-
plorable, it did not give the least hopes of for-
giveness, after the commission of sin: on the Gal. iii. 10.
contrary, it cursed every one that did not conti-
nue in all things, that were written in it, to do
them: and was that law attended with some de-
gree of an inward light, it only served to shew
them the enormity of their crimes, and their ex-
ceeding great unhappiness, and to stir up in their
minds dreadful perturbations; thus expressed by
St Paul, *O wretched man that I am, who shall de- Rom. vii. 24.*
liver me from the body of this death!

But blessed be the Lord, it is quite otherwise
with the holy Gospel, rightly called *Grace*, in op-
position to the Law; for God has made himself
manifest to us in that Gospel, not with a fright-
ful pomp and terrible splendor; not with thunders
and lightnings, with smoke, fire, and the quak-
ing of a mount: but in a gentle, mild, kind, fa-
miliar, and affable manner; under the veil of the
humanity of his beloved Son, by whose means
he proposes a reconciliation betwixt our offended
God and us; he offers the forgiveness of our sins,
he tenders us his most precious love, the source of
all glory and happiness; he promises his most pow-
erful protection, and the assistance of his Spirit a-
gainst all our enemies; and he declares that he will
grant us the glorious title of his children, and
make us heirs of the eternal kingdom of heaven,
if we do but repent of our sins, and rightly be-

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lieve in Jesus Christ, who enlightens our understandings by his sacred word and holy Spirit; that we may clearly see, that the performing these two conditions of the Gospel, is the true means whereby we may obtain eternal salvation; and who gives us all the help, all the succour, and all the encouragement we can reasonably desire, to enable us to accomplish them, and obey his commandments; which, far from being grievous, intolerable, and manifold, are very mild, gracious, and condescending; most reasonable, advantageous, and all contracted in St Matthew within two or three lines, namely, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself:* even a word does contain them; for St Paul tells us, that *love, or charity, is the fulfilling of the law.*

St Matt. xxii.

Rom. xiii. 10.

S E C T. III.

That the Gospel is all over Charity.

AND indeed the whole Gospel, whether considered in its mysteries, or in its doctrine, or in its discipline, or in its precepts, or in its promises, or in its threatnings, or in its sacraments, is all over Charity. In the mystery of the blessed Trinity, you see a most loving Father, a well beloved Son, and a Spirit full of Charity. The mystery of the Incarnation is all Love. There you may see the wonderful, transcendent, and unspeakable love of the Father, of the Son, and of the holy Ghost, towards mankind: of the Father, *Who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him,*

should

ould not perish, but have everlasting life: of the Son, Who was pleased to be made flesh, and to dwell among us; To be delivered for our offences, and to die for our sins; To rise again for our justification, and to sit at the right hand of God, in order to make intercession for us: of the holy Ghost, by whom Jesus Christ was conceived, that he might entirely free him from our natural corruption, which had made him incapable to accomplish our salvation.

John i. 14.
Rom. iv. 25.
1 Cor. v. 3.
Heb. vii. 25.
Matt. i. 20.

The doctrine of the gospel teaches us, that a man profiteth nothing, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul: That all things work together for good to them that love God: That godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come: That if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his; but if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies, by the spirit that dwelleth in us: That the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us: That except a man be born of water, i. e. be baptized, and of the spirit, i. e. do begin a new, pure, innocent, and spiritual life, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God: That we are sanctified, comforted, and justified by faith, which without works is dead: That the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth. That excellent doctrine gives us such a knowledge of God, and of his perfections, that it induces us most powerfully to love him with all our heart; for it teaches us, that he is the origin of all good, the source of a perfect happiness, the fountain of an eternal glory, and the spring of an everlasting life: that his almighty power has created, does preserve, and governs us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being: that his goodness provides for our

Matt. xvi. 26.
Rom. viii. 28.
1 Tim. iv. 8.
Rom. viii. 9.
11.

— 18.

John iii. 5.
Acts xxvi. 18.
Rom. i. 12.
— iii. 28.
James ii. 26.
John iv. 23.
Acts xvii. 28.

necessities; that his mercy forgives us our sins, that his charity calls us to him, that we may be partakers of his graces; and that his transcendent bountifulness will make us enjoy a most glorious and happy immortality. An admirable and a wonderful love is plainly seen in all the dispensations of the gospel. Nothing can be more evident, than that its end is to engage us to work out our salvation, and its design to induce us to love God with all our heart, and its aim to make us most happy for ever.

The discipline of the gospel intends either to save great sinners, or to keep others from falling into crimes, as you may clearly perceive in these following passages. *If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother, but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.* *Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.* *If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed; yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.* And when Jesus had breathed on his apostles, and given them his holy Ghost, who is a spirit of meekness and charity, he conferred upon them the authority to exercise the discipline of his gospel, saying, *Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.* There is a fact related in 1 Cor. v. which evidently shews, that the discipline of the gospel is very careful of men's souls. St Paul, hearing that there was among them an incestuous man, lets them know, that as

Matt. xviii. 15.

1 Tim. v. 20.

2 Theff. iii.

14, 15.

John xx. 22,
23.

absent

ins, absent in body, but present in spirit, he had already
bejudged concerning the offender: now the sentence
which he passed on the guilty person, was, That
they should in a public assembly deliver him unto
Satan for the destruction of the flesh, in the name,
and with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.
And why? That the spirit might be saved in the
day of the Lord Jesus.

Observe well how mild and full of charity that
discipline is, what tender regard it has for the
souls of great sinners, and how admirable its me-
thods are, to make men sensible of their faults,
and to reclaim them from their vices. First, to
give them the shame and the reproach which they
deserve, we must admonish them privately; if
that method does not work on them, another essay
must be made, with two or three men more; but
if they be still refractory, we must have recourse
to the church; but if she cannot reform them,
we are only permitted to look on them as de-
perate sinners.

Its precepts are full of love and charity, as you
may observe in the following passages. *If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he* Luke xvii.
repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee 3, 4.
seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn
again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive
him. Let your light so shine before men, that they Matt. v. 16,
may see your good works, and glorify your Father 44, 45.
which is in heaven. Love your enemies, bless them
that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and
pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute
you. Why so? That ye may be the children of your
Father which is in heaven; for he makes his sun to
rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain
on the just, and on the unjust. Be ye perfect, even
as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Lay — vi. 19, 20.
not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where
moth

- moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.
- Matt. vi. 33. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things, necessary for life, shall be added unto you. Judge not, that ye be not judged.*
- vii. 1, 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. In all these precepts an admirable love is plainly seen.*
- John xv. 12. *Its promises are full of charity. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, said Jesus Christ, that I will do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*
- Matt. xi. 28. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Every one, that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward. We, according to the promise of God, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, said St Peter.*
- xix. 29. *Henceforth there is laid up for those that have fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith, a crown of righteousness; which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give unto them at his appearing. The faithful servants of Christ shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men, the things which*
- I. 42. *which*
- 2 Pet. iii. 13. *which*
- 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. *which*
- 1 Pet. v. 4. *which*
- 1 Cor. ii. 9. *which*

which God hath prepared for them that love him.
 We plainly see in all these promises a wonder-
 ful love: there is a great charity even in his
 threatenings; for the end of them is to deter men
 from evil, and to bring them from the way of
 hell, into the way of heaven. *It is impossible but* Luke xvii. 1.
that offences will come, but we unto him through
whom they come. Every idle word that men shall Matt. xii.
speak they shall give an account thereof in the day of 36, 37.
judgement: for by thy words thou shalt be justified,
and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. The Son —xiii. 41, 42.
of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall ca-
st out of his kingdom all things that offend, and
them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a
burnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of
teeth. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from hea- 2 Thess. i.
ven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking 7, 8.
vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey
not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be
punished with everlasting destruction from the presence
of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. God Rom. ii. 6, 7,
will render to every man according to his deeds: to 8, 9.
them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek
for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life:
but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey
the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and
wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of
man that doth evil. The wages of sin is death. Rom. vi. 23.
 Now, the aim of all those threatenings is, as you
 may easily perceive, to reclaim us from our ill
 courses, and to induce us to amend our lives.
 The prophet Joel doth plainly intimate that such
 is the design of God's threatenings, when he says,
The day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and Joel ii. 11,
who can abide it? Therefore, says the Lord, turn 12, 13.
ye even unto me, with all your heart, and with
fasting and with weeping, and with mourning; and
rent your heart and not your garments, and turn un-

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to the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

As to the Sacraments commanded by our Lord to his disciples, if we consider the end for which they are instituted, we cannot but acknowledge, that it is exceeding gracious and charitable; for Baptism was ordained, that we may be purified and absolved from sin, which caused a most deplorable alienation betwixt God and us; that we may be received again into his most precious favour, and obtain the gift of God's holy Spirit, whereby we are enabled to work out our salvation; that we may be admitted into the church, God's blessed family, the mystical body of Christ; get a title unto a glorious immortality, and have an assurance of being made partakers of an eternal bliss.—And the holy Eucharist was appointed, that it may call our blessed Lord to our minds; together with what he has done in order to purchase unto us the kingdom of heaven; that it may quicken our love for, and raise in us pious affections towards that good and gracious Redeemer; that we may feed our souls with heavenly manna, with the bread of life, and revive and cherish them with a most delicious liquor; that our faith may be confirmed and strengthened, our hope nourished, our resolutions to walk in the way of heaven encouraged; our hearts filled with comfort and gladness, and our minds enlightned and sanctified: finally, that we may draw nigh to God, the fountain of all bliss, stedfastly unite ourselves to our blessed Lord, the author of eternal salvation, and combine in charity one towards another.

S E C T.

S E C T. IV.

The nature of Sin, or the old man within us.

NOW I shall endeavour to convince you, that the yoke and burden of sin is incomparably more uneasy, more intolerable, and a great deal less satisfactory even in this life, less gentle and pleasant, than the yoke and the burden of Jesus Christ and virtue; and so persuade you to submit to the last, and to cherish it.

In order to it, I must first inform you, that Satan, the great enemy of our happiness, who out of envy and malice, and by his flatteries, wiles, and enticements, draws continually a prodigious number of souls into his kingdom, full of darkness, horrors and torments; has been the instrument whereby sin and vice crept into man's heart: then I must represent to you the nature of that sin and vice, which is entirely opposite and repugnant to all goodness and piety, to uprightness, sincerity and holiness; to religion, righteousness, and all virtues; for it is edged with an inveterate malice against the soul, and with an everlasting hatred against godliness, full of stratagems and deceits to draw men into perdition, delighting in uncleanness, thwarting all religious duties, and opposing all that is good, moderate, wise, and charitable. It is of a nature so cleaving and adherent, that ivy sticks not closer and faster to a tree, or to a wall, than sin does to men. When once it has taken root in their hearts, let them do all they can, let repentance and amendment tear it off, and pluck it up, there will be some remains, till their *earthly houses be dissolved.*

2 Cor. v. 1;

The old man, or sin, is a spring out of which issues all manner of wickedness and impurity:
adultery,

Gal. v. 19,
20, 21.

adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like, flow from that impure spring.

The old man, or sin, at first is extremely flattering, fawning and alluring; it seems to be very sweet, pleasant, delicious, and charming. It appears at first sight of a very easy, complaisant, gentle, and obliging nature; and it looks as if it were a peaceable, mild, and officious servant; but having once drawn in our affections, crept into our hearts, screwed itself into our minds, and taken possession of our souls; then we find, to our sorrow and confusion, that it is exceedingly dangerous, fierce, and dismal; full of treachery, falshood, and perfidiousness, and abounding with griefs, vexations, and torments: we find, that it is of a most unquiet and turbulent nature; that it never ceases to tempt, to corrupt, and to harden our hearts, and that it will reign over us, with all the imperiousness, and all the tyranny imaginable; bring us into captivity to its law, and make us rebel against our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and our supreme Judge. We find that it deals with us as *Jael* dealt with *Sisera*; she called him in, into her tent, gave him milk, covered him with a mantle, and seemed to be concerned for his safety, and to favour his rest; but as soon as he was fast asleep, out come the instruments of death, a nail and a hammer; *She smote, says the scripture, the nail into his temple, and fastened it into the ground; so he died*: thus does sin use men: it intices and allures their hearts, by shewing for them a seeming great tenderness, by assuring them of an entire security, and by promising that they shall have all manner of diversions, enjoy abundance of pleasures, possess vast riches, and that they

Rom. vii. 27.

they shall be raised to great honours; but having
once lulled men asleep in its impurity; alas! it
shows its cruelty at work. Far from keeping them
safe, it hurries them into the most imminent
dangers, and instead of diversions, it brings dis-
tresses and anguish upon them: instead of pleasures,
it fills their souls with griefs and afflictions; in-
stead of riches, it plunges them into an unex-
pressible misery, and instead of honours, it covers
them with shame, infamy, and confusion.

S E C T. V.

Its dismal effects and direful mischiefs.

BUT let the dismal effects of sin, or the old
man, its direful mischiefs, and its horrible
attendance, utterly convince us of its exceeding
great tyranny, treacherousness, and barbarity.
What dreadful mischiefs, what lamentable dis-
tresses, what dismal confusions has it not caused
in heaven; where God does manifest his glory,
his power, his wisdom, his holiness, in a special
and extraordinary manner. It has corrupted a
great number of pure and glorious spirits, induced
them to conspire, and incited them to rebel against
their Creator, their Preserver, their supreme Lord,
who was the origin of all their perfections, and
the fountain of their unspeakable happiness: and
so rendered these most illustrious creatures the
eternal objects of his wrath, indignation, and
vengeance. Man was no sooner made, but that
restless and implacable sin egged him on to make
use of all their guile and craftiness, in order to
deprave him, that he might be partaker, with his
posterity, of their everlasting misery. The thing
was

was undertaken, put in execution, and brought As to
to pass. Man was drawn away from God and his most
law, alienated and estranged from his great benefactor, read
factor. Then sin slipped into his heart, and from thence;
thence spread all over, got through all the faculties made
ties of his soul, and run into all the members of his ag
his body; in short, it corrupted the whole man capable
and so his mind that was before pure, holy, clear, be ob
and serene; adorned with excellent virtues, and a positor
a wonderful knowledge, attended with innocent, holy,
pious, and good thoughts, is now vitiated. Since wor
has filled it with all manner of impurity, with a variety
profanation, ungodliness, vanity, ignorance and a sink of
darkness; with unprofitable notions, with perceptive
verse disputes, rash and pernicious controversies; and
silly and impertinent inquiries, that only serve to blas
hide the truth; with wretched contrivances, with a perfid
fickleness, and with swarms of roving, empty and customs
foolish thoughts. Beside

Eph. iv. 19.

1 Tim. iv. 2.

Heb. ix. 14.

As to his conscience, which ought to induce him to perform carefully his duties, sin has likewise corrupted it; for it has rendered it hard, past feeling, insensible; seared it as with a hot iron from an
filled it with dead works; and furnished it with a variety of
false and absurd excuses.

His heart, which ought to be an unspotted, now filthy
clean, a holy, and a sacred temple, for the glory and app
and the service of our supreme Lord, has been defiled, de
also extremely defiled by that abominable sin, the
for it has made it a sink of wickedness and impiety;
piety, of pollution and filthiness, of deep deceit and
and hypocrisy. It has made it capable of entertaining
taining any vice, any crime; and copious in vain
foul, and wicked desires; it has stored it with
impenitency, unbelief, treachery, and infidelity and th
and supplied it with contempt for religion, with a
disdain for the most precious promises of the gospel, and
pel, and scorn for God's dreadful threatenings. with a

As to his will, which ought to be very dutiful and most submissive to the good pleasure of God's will, ready and inclined to perform his commandments; busy and delighting in doing good; sin made it very disobedient to, and most rebellious against God, extremely averse to his laws, incapable of itself to do any good, and very apt to be obstinate. The memory, which should be a repository of good, pious, and charitable thoughts; of holy, pure, and heavenly notions; of the sacred word of God, of the true knowledge of our salvation, and of an useful learning: sin made it a sink of evil, profane, and uncharitable thoughts; a receptacle of irreligious, filthy, and hellish notions; a magazine of oaths, curses, imprecations, and blasphemies; a common-sewer of heresies, superstitions, and idolatry, and a receiver of wicked customs, ill habits, and pernicious principles.

Besides, it has corrupted all our passions. I need but mention that, which is the spring of all the others, *i. e.* Love, the first, the mother, the chief, the most powerful, the reigning passion, from and to which all the rest are derived and renewed; for if that source be corrupted, all the streams that flow from it must be so likewise. Now sin has made our love exceedingly vicious, by applying it to, and wrapping it up in unworthy, despicable, and dangerous objects, such as are the corruptions, the pride, and the lust of the flesh; the vain honours, and the false greatness of this world; its seeming goods, and deceitful pleasures; its criminal diversions, and wicked pleasures; which pleasures, spurring men on to all manner of villanies, are the plagues of mankind, and the gulphs that drown most part of them in perdition; and the magazines from whence the mortal enemies of our salvation furnish themselves with arms to destroy us.

Moreover, sin having taken possession of the whole man, does not only war against his mind but it likewise vitiates his members, and brings him into captivity to its law, as St Paul says.

Rom. vii. 23. *1st*, It depraves the eyes, by sowing in them the seeds of fraud and treachery; of an abominable lust, and of an odious pride; of a gnawing envy, of a pitiful covetousness, of a raging wrath and of a prodigious number of insatiable desires. Now the eyes communicating these cursed seeds to the whole man, he brings forth a world of mischiefs.

2dly, Sin fills the ear with fulsome and perfidious flatteries, with detestable and destructive calumnies, with malicious slanders, with hateful lies, and with obscene stories.

3dly, What horrible mischiefs, what sad confusion does it not cause by the means of the tongue though one of the smallest parts of a man's body it makes that little member the instrument of all manner of wickedness and desolation. Good God! what a prodigious noise does it not make what a deal of hurt does it not do? how many heresies and errors does it not propagate? how many contentions, how many disputes and factions does it not stir up in the church? alas! it sets whole families, whole kingdoms, and the whole world on fire, with variance, and strife, and jars and divisions. It depraves, it infects, it poisons most of the whole society of men. Be pleased to hear what St James says of that little, but exceedingly malicious thing, and you will find that what I have asserted of it is confirmed by that apostle. *The tongue*, says he, *is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and it is set on fire of hell*, i.e. kindled by the devil with a fire that comes from the bottomless pit. He goes on, *Every kind of beasts*

and

and of birds, and of serpents, and things in the sea, tamed, and have been tamed of mankind; but the tongue can no man tame, it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

4thly, Sin has made the hands and the feet instruments of violence and mischief, making use of the dexterity of the one, to steal, to hurt, to murder, and of the swiftness of the other, to run, in order to indulge wicked desires, either in taking revenge, or in satisfying vain curiosities, or in satisfying concupiscence. Thus you see what a monster of wickedness sin has made man. But let us consider further, its direful attendance, I mean the horrible judgements that follow after it, even in this life.

S E C T. VI.

The dreadful judgements it brings upon men during this life.

THIS is sin which has enraged man against man, and nations against nations; which arms them so that they may destroy one another. How many murders, how many slaughters, how many massacres has it not caused? how many wars has it not kindled? what devastations has it not made? It is sin that brought the deluge in *Noah's* time, that drowned *Pharaoh* and his army in the *Red Sea*; that so often drew dreadful punishments upon the *Israelites*; that turned *Sodom* and *Gomorrab* into a stinking lake, and brought upon *Jerusalem*, (the glory of the earth) an entire desolation and utter destruction; that has ruined so many empires, and laid waste so many countries, and obscured the Christian world with a prodigious darkness;

ness; from whence issued an extreme ignorance
 a gross superstition, and an horrible idolatry.
 is sin that does its utmost endeavours to drive
 away and to banish charity (which is to religion
 what our soul is to our body) from among men
 by sharpening so much tongue against tongue, by
 setting to paper pens flowing with gall and poison;
 filling so many pamphlets with bitterness
 and with more revilings, abusive language, and
 biting jests, to provoke, than with strong argu-
 ments, good sense, and evident reasons to con-
 vince, and that spurs men on to follow their ad-
 versaries with more clamour, bawling, reproach
 and barking, than with skill, art and ingenuity.
 It is sin that has poured out upon mankind
 world of griefs, troubles, disgraces, and afflic-
 tions; that fills them with defects, imperfections
 and prejudices; that torments them with a mul-
 titude of infirmities, diseases, sicknesses, and
 grievous sufferings; that plagues them with hide-
 ous havocks, with terrible confusions, and dire-
 ful ransackings; that loads them with shame, re-
 proach, and infamy; that causes destructive fa-
 mines, and fatal plagues, dreadful tempests,
 storms, and inundations; terrible earthquakes,
 thunders and lightnings; that has brought death
 with a direful sting upon them, and laid the very
 Prince of life dead in a sepulchre. It is sin that
 has poisoned the pleasures, the diversions, the
 comforts, the goods and the riches of this world
 that has rendered its dignities, honours, prefer-
 ments and reputation, dangerous, as well as peace,
 quietness and plenty, health, strength and cou-
 rage; that has made eating, drinking, and sleep-
 ing full of inconveniencies: in short, it is sin that
 has turned the blessings of this world into curses.

It is sin that has made men obnoxious to all the
 temptations of the devil, to all his suggestions
 deceit

deceits and solicitations, and that has exposed them to all his snares, devices and crafty wiles; were it not for sin, all his engines, all his cunning, all his efforts, could by no means prevail with their souls, nor have any advantage over them. It would not at all be in his power to deprave their nature, to hurt them, and to hurry them along to destruction. Satan, knowing that his utmost endeavours cannot corrupt us without entertaining and cherishing his temptations, neglects nothing to hold correspondence with our passions, and to practise upon our affections, which he allures with all the subtilty imaginable. Having attracted and bribed them, he conveys sily by their means the seeds of all manner of wickedness into our souls, which afterward conceive and bring forth a world of ill thoughts, of mischievous words, and bad deeds. That deceitful and treacherous spirit, who delights in doing evil, searches out our dispositions and inclinations; to them he suiteth his temptations, and from them he takes ingredients which he tempers with the instigations he makes use of, in inducing them to do evil: As for example, has a man a great deal of wit and pride; he will be sure to prompt him to disbelieve the sublime truths of the gospel, that are above his understanding, and to despise its ingenuity and plainness. Is another inclined to lust and drinking; he will not fail to persuade him to scorn all its rules about continence and sobriety. Has a third great riches; he will tempt him to be self-conceited, to slight his neighbours, and to give himself over to his pleasures. Is a fourth poor; he will induce him to find fault with the distributions of providence, to be discontented, and to murmur against God. Has a fifth a great deal of learning; he will not fail to put into his head vain-glory. Is a sixth of a

strong constitution, and full of vigour; he will entice him to take all manner of sinful pleasure. Is a seventh infirm and sickly; he will make him peevish, fretful, capricious, impatient and whimpering. Hath an eighth a great authority; Satan will entice him to wrong, to scorn, to abuse and to oppress his neighbours.

It is sin, or the old man, the devil's creature that cools mens devotions, extinguishes their zeal, quenches their fervency, and deadens their faith; that casteth into their minds impertinent thoughts to hinder their attention, either in their prayers or at the hearing, or the reading of God's word; and that makes them misapply, misconstrue, and wrest to their perdition the holy Scriptures. It is sin that has made the law of life and liberty, the law of bondage, of curse, and death; turned the very preaching of the gospel into a favour of death unto death, and provoked the best of beings, the most gracious God, the everlasting Father, whose compassion is unspeakable, and the infinitely bountiful Creator, to pursue the workmanship of his almighty power with wrath and indignation even with hatred and perdition; *To repent of, and to grieve at his having made man.* Alas! it is sin that has drawn, and that keeps them afar off from their supreme good; that has been the cause of their having no hope, and of their being *without God in the world*; and that has made them aliens, foreigners, and strangers from that fountain of glory. It is sin which has so incensed the almighty against wretched men, that by a just judgement, he has struck their souls with blindness and obstinacy, and brought them under subjection to the concupiscence of their flesh, *to uncleanness, and to vile affections*, even to the fury, malice, and revenge of Satan; sent them strong delusions,

Gen. vi. 6.

Eph. ii. 12,
17, 19.

Rom. i. 24, 28.

visions, that they should believe a lie; left them to their reprobate mind; and given them the spirit of mber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear. It is sin which has so much provoked him, that he has dismayed, terrified, and disturbed their consciences, galled and wounded them with reproaches, raised in them a vast many scruples, and pursued them with checks, moroses, and *a worm that shall not die*: that he has disquieted their hearts with amazements, fears and terrors; vexed them with misgivings, confusion and anguish, and afflicted them with starts, wakings and despair; that he has distracted their wills with inconstancy and changeableness, which makes them always uneasy, and put in them a multitude of desires, that continually persecute them; that he has laid up in their memories the dismal remembrance of their crimes, which are to be followed by dreadful punishments, and stored them with several instances of the severity of his justice, with the threatnings of his word, and with grievous thoughts about the end of their lives, and concerning the shame, misery, and torments which await them: that he has snatched their passions with disorder, trouble, disturbance, and restlessness, and caused them to oppose, to torment, and to destroy one another; and that he has made the members of their bodies liable to a world of accidents, to many inconveniencies, to numberless diseases, and to grievous sufferings. These are the judgements which sin brings upon mankind during this life; and tho' dreadful, yet they are not comparable to those that are to follow after death.

2 Theff. ii.

11.
Rom. i. 28.

— xi. 8.

Isa. lxvi. 24.

S E C T. VII.

The horrible and lasting punishments which the wicked shall endure after death, if they do not repent of their sins in due time.

THE scripture expresseth the punishments which the wicked shall then endure after death, by *a curse*, by *an unquenchable fire*, by *a furnace of fire*, by *an everlasting fire*, by *a worm that dieth not*, and by *a lake of fire burning with brimstone*. Expressions which give us frightful hints of future punishments. The “curse of God” denotes his exceedingly great hatred, his dreadful wrath, and an extreme indignation; and “a worm that dieth not, an unquenchable, an everlasting fire, a furnace, and a lake of fire burning with brimstone,” represent to us, the continual, the excessive, the acutest, and the perpetual torments of hell: and so the damned shall not only be deprived of God’s most precious love, the source of all felicity, the fountain of all good, the spring of all glory, and the inexhaustible treasure of riches; be excluded from heaven, the place of an infinite and everlasting bliss; of an endless kingdom, and of immortal crowns; and the abode both of the blessed angels, and of the glorified souls; and bereaved of all manner of blessings, even of the least shadow of hope ever to enjoy any happiness: but besides, both their bodies and souls shall suffer the most exquisite torments.

The remembrance of what is past, the recalling to mind their odious offences and horrid crimes, the deceitful gaities they have had, the false goods they have possessed, the treacherous pleasures they have enjoyed, the vain-glory they have been fed withal, and the chimerical honours they

They have pursued with the greatest eagerness; as well as their recollecting the many blessings they have abused, the great graces they have rejected, the precious promises they have made no account of, the exhortations whereof they have taken no notice, and the threatnings they have laughed at. Besides, the consideration of the infinite glory, and of the supreme felicity the faithful shall be raised to and blessed with, and of the wonderful triumph gotten over all their enemies, Jesus Christ, in whom they would not believe, and whose laws they have despitefully trampled upon; the thoughts of their having lost by their own fault vast riches, unspeakable pleasures, immortal crowns, and of their being plunged, by reason of their wickedness, into an abyss of misery, despair, and horrors, will torture them in a most cruel manner, sink them into the deepest sorrow, and bring upon them an inexpressible agony: when, then there will be insignificant repentings, weepings, cryings and bemoanings, as well as a lamentable wringing of hands, a dismal gnashing of teeth, and horrible belching out blasphemies against their supreme Judge; whilst all the voices of God's dreadful displeasure and vengeance will be opened upon them; whilst his indignation, more insupportable than all the torments we have any notion of, whilst his hand, heavier than mountains, and his wrath, hotter than the most violent fire, shall fall and rush on those lost wretches, and overwhelm them.

Thus you see, how heavy, hard, ungrateful and cruel the yoke of sin is, what a wretched and lamentable condition it will bring men into, even in this life, and what a direful reward it will bestow upon them, when they shall pass from time into eternity, unless the divine mercy and the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ do intervene.

But

But let us leave so sad, so melancholy, so dolorous, so plorable a subject, and consider another full of comfort, delight, and satisfaction; I mean, the blessed yoke of our dear Saviour Jesus Christ, and of virtue, his glorious image.

S E C T. VIII.

What Jesus Christ, or the new man created in us by him, requires of us.

NOW what does our Lord command us *To love.* Whom? *God*, the best, the most excellent, the wisest, the most amicable, and the perfectest of all Beings, that has loved us first, whose power has created us, whose providence does preserve us, whose goodness is the origin of all the blessings, and all the comforts we enjoy. What else does he enjoin us? *To love.* Whom besides God? *Our neighbours*, who are branches of the same stock, and streams of the same source we come from, whose nature is the same as ours, for we all have been made of one blood; and we all are indued with a rational soul, and the same image of the divine mind is imparted to us all in common. Does he not require something further? Yes, he will have us love ourselves, as well as to do all that lies in our power to perfect our nature, that by him we may be found worthy to be admitted into the most glorious, and the happiest of all abodes, the kingdom of heaven, full of everlasting treasures, and of endless honours; and abounding with pleasures, that, far from surfeiting, grow sweeter and sweeter, still more pleasant and delicious, as they are enjoyed where our sight shall be blessed with a glorious light.

1 John iv. 19.

Acts xvii. 26.

ht, that shall never be succeeded by any dark-
s, and our ears with a most ravishing melody,
t shall never be interrupted by complaints
bitter cries, by groans or lamentations ; our
arts with the unspeakably delectable sensation of
d's love, our minds with the inexpressible sa-
faction of conversing with his holy angels, and
ere our whole persons, both body and soul,
ll be partakers of greater blessings than it is
ssible for us to conceive. Now what does the
w man require? *To live soberly, righteously and* Tit. ii. 12.
ly; to be thankful to our great Creator and
nefactor, to pay him our most religious ho-
ages, and to obey chearfully his command-
ents: *to do as we would that men should do to* Luke vi. 31.
to render to all their dues, to be temperate, dis- Rom. xiii. 7.
et, and holy. Why does virtue require of us
ese things? that we may be happy both in this
e and in the next. Thus you see that what
sus Christ enjoins us, and what the new man
mands of us, come to the same thing, *i. e.* to
ove, and that they have the same end, which is
r felicity: wherefore since all the command-
ents of our blessed Lord, and all the precepts
lays upon us may be reduced to one, which
to love; it is well worth our while, to examine
e nature of that love, as well as its properties,
d the admirable effects it produces.

S E C T. IX.

the nature of love, its effects and advantages.

OVE, or charity, is a natural affection,
which having its origin and seat in the heart,
oes unite itself so closely to it, and grows so
power-

powerful therein, that it takes possession of our thoughts and its desires, and becomes the great spring, and the chief principle of our actions, which consequently are either sinful or virtuous according as the objects it fixes upon happen to be: all the other affections having their first rise and their strength from that root, they grow bad or good, as they are influenced by it; wherefore love takes goodness for its object, both its trunk and its branches have a tendency to that goodness, and so God being the source of all goodness, is the true, the proper, the peculiar object of love, the foundation thereof, and its true center. Now as the rays which proceed from that center, do act and quicken many rational creatures to righteousness and holiness, we are obliged to esteem and love them, because of the excellency which they derive from God: but that love must be kindled in us by the rays that issue from the center of that supreme goodness. Such love as that is properly by what the Scripture calls charity.

Now when that charity is in possession of our hearts, it cherishes all virtues, and drives vice away. It induces a man to be pious, to serve God faithfully and with cheerfulness: to prefer him to all his creatures, even to his own life. It renders him just, upright, sincere, merciful and compassionate: it engages him to be of a public and generous spirit, and to apply himself, as much as he can, to promote the happiness of mankind. It disposes him to display the charms of liberality and bountifulness towards them, and to be an asserter and a defender of the truth, and to hope well of his neighbours. It persuades him to lead a temperate life, to exercise his patience, and to be very modest. It cuts off all wicked partiality, as well as all selfish narrowness of spirit, from

from whence spring wrongs, injustices, and self-conceitedness: it banishes from him envy, malice, and revenge; it shames glorying and haughtiness; it subdues pride, ambition, and lust; it conquers avarice and self-interest; it cools passion and anger, and it will not suffer us to misconstrue our neighbours actions, and to entertain strongly ill opinions of them: thus charity begins at the producing all these blessed effects. That it spreads into all virtues, and drives vice away, is very plain by the Scripture, which powerfully recommends to us all the virtues above-mentioned, and exhorts us with all the earnestness possible, to conquer the aforesaid vices.

Now the holy Scripture tells us, *That all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments*, the first is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and the second like unto it is, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* That it is the principle of obedience: That love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, is the end of the commandment, *i. e.* of the law; and that all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;* Gal. v. 14. Col. iii 14. That love is the bond of perfectness. And relating to its excellent properties, and its averseness from sin, the Scripture says, *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not, Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* 1 Cor. xiii. 4. 5, 6, 7.

Besides, there are very great advantages that do attend charity: it propitiates for our crimes, it averts God's judgements from us, and appeases his anger against our sins; for St Peter assures us,

That

- 1 Pet. i. 8. *That charity shall cover a multitude of sins.* It titles us to the comforts, and the blessings of God, to his protection, to his love, and consequently to his glory, and his felicity. *Let them that love thy name,* says David, *be joyful in thee:* and again, *They shall prosper that love thee:* furthermore, *The Lord preserveth all those that love him;* and Jesus Christ says, *If any man love me, my Father will love him; I love them that love me.* *Riches and honour,* says Wisdom, *are with me;* yet *durable riches and righteousness:* and St James declares, that *The Lord has promised the crown of life and his kingdom, to them that love him.* These other great advantages of love are these: its bringing the soul of faith, its inducing us to perform God's commandments, and its freeing us from fear; for St Paul tells us, *That faith worketh love;* and Jesus Christ intimates, that it is the cause of our obeying his precepts; *There is no fear in love,* says St John, *perfect love casteth out fear.*
- Moreover, love conquers the greatest reluctancies we find in our corrupt nature, for the forsaking of our vices, and for the weaning our affections from this world. It reconciles us to those precepts men look upon as hard, even as unpracticable, and it renders the practice of them, not only tolerable, but also easy, even pleasant and delectable. Love powerfully engages us to have an entire confidence in God's most gracious and infinitely wise providence, that disposes of all events as he thinks fit, and orders them to *work together for our good.* It induces us to avoid carefully all that is contrary to our salvation, and to do our best endeavour to *be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.* Love is a strong cement whereby men may be well united, an excellent observer of right and equity, the best keeper of order and peace, and a powerful inducement
- Pfalm v. 11.
— cxxii. 6.
— cxlv. 20.
John xiv. 23.
Prov. viii. 17, 18.
James i. 12.
— ii. 5.
Gal. v. 6.
1 John iv. 18.
Rom. viii. 28.
Matt. v. 48.

It is the obedience of God's commandments. Love is another admirable property, which is the recommending to God the good we do, though it is mixed with a great deal of imperfection, and engaging him to accept of, and to reward it, with eternal happiness. Thus you see, that love is the noblest of all virtues, and therefore it will be admitted into heaven, and endure to all eternity. When the faithful go out of this world, most of the other virtues leave them for ever, but love, or charity, attends them into the kingdom of heaven: I say, that most of the other virtues leave the faithful, when they depart this life; the reason of it is evident, for being founded either on our own misery, or on the misery of our neighbours, they must needs cease by death, because there will be no misery in heaven, and the misery in hell shall never cease; and so all these other virtues shall be at an end. Now, that most of the other virtues are grounded either upon our own misery, or on the misery of other people, is plain; for faith is founded upon our want of an heavenly knowledge, hope upon our need, repentance upon our sins, humility upon our imperfections, patience upon our sufferings, continence and sobriety are remedies against carnal appetites, and courage against fear. Liberty has for its foundation the indigence of our neighbours; compassion, either their griefs, their troubles, or their afflictions; and forbearance, whether their failings, or their infirmities, or their wickedness. Love will be in heaven the chief, and perhaps the only law. That excellent, that noble, that admirable, that divine virtue, shall reign for ever in that glorious and eternal kingdom. *Charity never faileth, says St Paul; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be* 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13.
know-

1 John iv. 7,
8, 16.

knowledge, it shall vanish away. Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity. The pre-eminence of that virtue over the two others, will evidently appear, if what *John* asserts in his first epistle is duly considered. For he declares, *That love is not only of God, but moreover, that he who loveth not, knoweth not God*; the reason of it he subjoins; *for, saith he, God is love*: again, *He who dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him*. Thus you see that by the means of love we know God, and we possess him, and he possesses us. Now by possessing God we possess the true and the natural object of love, *i. e.* the source of all goodness, as well as the origin of all righteousness, and the fountain of all wisdom; and by being possessed by him, we become virtuous and perfect; which is all that the law of the gospel requires of us. Furthermore, the eminency of Love, or Charity, will be very apparent, if we consider, that love is the chiefest and the noblest part of God's image in us, which faith and hope are not, because neither of them is found in God; for there is no Being above him to be the object of his faith, and as he is perfectly happy in himself he hopes for no felicity.

S E C T. X.

The objects of Love.

HAVING thus considered Love, the director of our thoughts, the promoter of our words, and the soul of our actions, let us now see which are the proper objects of that powerful affection. It is of the greatest importance for

the Yoke of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

being made virtuous, perfect and happy, not only to have a true notion of love, but also to be well acquainted with its true objects, and to know how to apply it to them; for as all our desires, and consequently our dissatisfactions, and our misery, issue from our disordinate and un-
 love; so our virtues, and by consequence our content and our felicity, proceed from an orderly and well regulated love: did we but love as we ought to do, all would be well with us; but alas! we love what we should not love, I mean sensible creatures, which are not able to have the least affection for us; and we love not as we ought God who loved us first, and who is the author of all the blessings we enjoy, and the giver of a glorious immortality. We love that which corrupts our nature, and which is often our ruin, *i. e.* mammon, unlawful pleasures, vanity, and the ill customs and wicked practices of this world; and we love not God, who sanctifies and perfects our nature, who is the author of our salvation, and the source of all our happiness: we love men for reasons taken from our corruption, but not from the image of the supreme goodness, which we may see in them; therefore it was of an absolute necessity, both to our temporal and eternal welfare, to have our love take its due and requisite course; now the blessed yoke of Jesus Christ does bend that governing affection towards the most excellent, and the noblest of all its objects, and towards rational creatures, proportionably as the image of the supreme goodness is seen in them; I say, that the yoke of our Lord does incline our love towards God, for it brings us to the knowledge of a Being good, so just, so wise, so merciful, in a word, so perfect, that whenever our unruly passions are raging, and are silent; our heart cannot

D

refuse

refuse him our entire love. It sets our understandings aright, by engaging us to consider, that being the author of our life, and of all our excellent faculties, as well as of all the comforts and of all the blessings we enjoy, he well deserves to be preferred to every thing whatsoever.

It induces us to reflect upon the unexpressible misery and the dreadful torments we were doomed to, and delivered from, by his unspeakable charity, through his beloved Son; as well as upon the eternal glory, the inexhaustible riches, and the everlasting pleasures purchased unto us by his infinite bounty through our blessed Lord Jesus

Eph. ii. 5, 6, 7. *for, says St Paul, God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us, together with Christ, and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, thro' Jesus*

John ii. 16. *Christ: and St John, God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Besides, by that blessed yoke, we are drawn into the way of godliness which leadeth to a glorious immortality, and we are made to run the way, and to go in the paths of his commandments, whereby we serve, we worship, and we adore his infinite, eternal, and most glorious majesty; and we praise, we bless, and we extol his unspeakable love towards mankind, which entitles us to glory, and to an happiness that may be possessed and enjoyed, but cannot be expressed nor conceived.

Psal. cxix.
32, 25.

Now be pleased to judge, whether there is the least reason to say, that the yoke of Jesus Christ is too hard and too severe in that respect, and whether, on the contrary, it is not very natural

and just, fitting and expedient, to love entirely the source of all goodness, the author of all the admirable faculties we are endowed with, and the fountain of all the blessings we enjoy in this life, as well as of the supreme felicity we shall be partakers of to all eternity; and consequently to take all the care we can to please him, by a behaviour agreeable to his holy will; to have thoughts suitable to his children, to speak his praise and glory, and to act as much as in us lies for his service. Were our passions less noisy, and our reason better hearkened to, doubtless our self-love would powerfully induce us to love with all our heart so amiable an object, in whom all perfections are to be found in the highest degree, and from whom all the goodness, all the wisdom, all the righteousness, all the power, all the holiness of angels and men, have their spring.

2dly, The yoke of our blessed Lord does incline our love towards rational creatures, proportionably as the image of the supreme goodness is seen in them. Now the rational creatures are either angelical or human. As to the first, though there is no injunction in the gospel to love them, yet I see no reason why we should not love in this life, those we shall certainly love for ever in the next: but as to the others, there is a very express, positive, and urgent law in that gospel to love them as ourselves. I need not repeat what I have already quoted; I only observe, that this evangelical law plainly intimates, that our self-love is to be the rule whereby we are to love our neighbours, and that therefore, it is very requisite to shew how we ought to love ourselves according to the precepts of the holy gospel; for indeed without putting them in practice, man cannot be said to love himself as he should do; on the contrary it may be truly asserted, that he

is to himself the most dangerous of his enemies, and that if he be deprived of a quiet, sweet, and happy life, exposed to many fatal accidents, liable to a world of sorrows, and subject to great misery, to numberless afflictions, and to horrible anguishes, he must lay the fault upon himself; for his inordinate and unruly passions are the true cause of the bitterness, and of the torments of this life. From whence come most of his distempers and diseases, several of his infelicities, and very often his entire ruin, but from his intemperance and debaucheries? What draws upon him a world of troubles, mortifications, griefs, disgraces, and disappointments, but ambition? What loads him with shame, infamy, reproach and confusion, but pride? What occasions him discontents, carking cares, mistrusts, suspicions, and abundance of losses, but covetousness? Wherefore it was of an absolute necessity to give him rules, whereby he might love himself as he ought to do. Now it is what the holy gospel has most happily performed: for its precepts engage man to have for himself the truest and the sincerest love; whereby he is aware of intemperance, which impairs his estate, ruins his health, shortens his life, confounds and besots his mind; which lets loose his passions, spurs him on to disputes, quarrels and murders; induces him to luxury, riot, and lasciviousness, and makes him forget what he owes to God, to his neighbours, and to himself: and whereby he cherishes sobriety, which upholds his estate, preserves his health, prolongs his days, and keeps his mind clear and serene, and well disposed to perform its noble functions; which curbs his passions, inclines him to peace, restrains his concupiscence, and by which he has a free scope to think of his duties towards his Maker, his brethren and himself; whereby man is enabled

ed to forsake his vices which estrange him from
 od, his heavenly Father, and corrupt his na-
 re, which deface in his soul all his glory, I
 mean God's image, and kindle against him the
 dreadful wrath of his supreme Judge: whereby he
 induced to humble himself before God, the
 source of all perfections; to acknowledge his in-
 firmities, his faults and unworthiness; to own
 that he is but a poor wretched creature, uncapa-
 ble without the divine assistance of getting out of
 his unexpressible misery; and whereby he is
 moved to have his recourse to the infinite merits
 of his blessed Saviour, by whose means he may
 be saved. Now, that repentance and humility
 are absolutely necessary in order to be made happy,
 is an undoubted truth; for, says Jesus Christ in
 St Matthew, *Except ye be converted, and become as* Matt. xviii.
little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of 3. 4.
heaven; and in St Luke, Except ye repent, ye shall Luke xiii. 3.
all perish; again, Every one that exalteth himself — xviii. 14.
shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be
exalted; and St James declares, That God resisteth James iv. 6.
the proud, but that he gives grace unto the humble.
 That well-ruled love moves him to wean his
 heart from this world, which is incapable to give
 him perfect contentment, and to make him truly
 happy; it moves him to be faithful to Jesus Christ,
 even though his fidelity to that blessed Lord should
 draw upon him a cruel persecution, and prove
 his death; because he is the author of a glorious
 immortality, the giver of eternal crowns, and the
 source of a supreme felicity. *Love not the world,* 1 John ii.
 says St John, *neither the things that are in the* 15, 16.
world: if any man love the world, the love of the
Father is not in him; for all that is in the world,
The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the
pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the
world. And our blessed Saviour, If any man will Matt. xvi. 24,
come 25, 26.

Rev. ii. 10.

2 Tim. ii.

11, 12.

Phil. ii. 12.

Rom. xii. 9.

Eph. iv. 1, 2.

2 Cor. vii. 1.

Col. iii. 1.

Rom. xii. 10,
18, 20.

come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Again, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. And St Paul declares, That if we be dead in him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him. Our self-love, regulated by the injunctions of the gospel, presses us very much to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; To abhor that which is evil, and to cleave to that which is good; To wait unworthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness; To cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God; To seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; to make without any delay our peace with our supreme Judge, and to do our utmost endeavours to please him, that we may avert from us his dreadful judgements, and be partakers of his unspeakable felicity.

Such ought to be our love for our neighbours *i. e.* for all men, even for our enemies. The want of which occasions a world of disputes, quarrels, and disorders, and leaves a full latitude to frauds and injustices, to unmercifulness and cruelties, to detraction and calumnies. But the having our love regulated by the precepts of the gospel, powerfully induces us to be kindly affectioned one towards another, To live, if possible, as much as lieth in us, peaceably with all men; To feed our enemy if he hunger, and to give him drink if he thirst, and to do all the good we can to our neighbours. Now as they are composed both of a body and of a soul, all the advantages we are able

le to procure to them both, may be reduced to two classes; one respects the body, and the other concerns the soul. As to the first, the law of charity engages us to preserve, as much as lieth in us, their healths and their lives, and to contribute to their prosperity; to help, to protect, and to defend the poor; to visit, relieve, and comfort the sick and the afflicted, according to our power and abilities. *By love serve one another*, says St Paul: again, *To do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*; and St James, *Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions*. Jesus Christ tells us in St Matthew, of the unspeakable happiness, and the exceeding great glory that will accrue to bountiful people. *Come, ye blessed of my Father*, will that supreme Judge say to them, *when he renders to every man according to his deeds*, says St Paul; *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

Gal. v. 13.

Heb. xiii. 16.

James i. 27.

Rom. ii. 6.

Matt. xxv.

34, 35, 36.

As to their souls, the law of charity obliges us to pray heartily for their salvation, to convince them of the deplorable condition sin has reduced them to, and to reclaim them from their ill courses, by sound advices, prudent exhortations, earnest entreaties, and timely reproofs. *Warn them that are unruly*, says St Paul; and St James, *Let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins*. That law of charity engages us to induce them to be humble, modest, and temperate; to instruct

1 Thess. v.

14.

Col. iii. 2.

carefully the ignorant of the indispensable duties of religion; to remove scruples and doubts, which disturb poor souls, and keep them in suspense between hope and fear; and to settle those, whose minds are troubled, in the temper they should be in. It urges us to persuade them to despise the vain glory of this world, and to detest its wicked customs, ill practices, and bad principles; to loath its sinful pleasures, and to wean their hearts from its riches; to have a strict union with their Saviour, to serve him faithfully, and to obey with care his commandments; *To set their affection on things above*, and to make as soon as possible their peace with God, in whose power is death and life, damnation and salvation. Finally, it requires of us, to excite and to encourage them, not only by word of mouth, but likewise by good examples, to perform acts of godliness, to do works of charity, and to apply themselves to the sanctification of their souls. These are the best services that can be done, and the greatest advantages that can be procured; for they aim both at our temporal welfare, and at our eternal felicity; wherefore we should take all the care possible and apply ourselves diligently to do such services and to procure such advantages to our relations, friends, and neighbours.

S E C T. XI.

That to be under the yoke of Jesus Christ is our present, and will be our future happiness and glory.

NOW let any man consider impartially the yoke of sin, and the yoke of Jesus Christ, and let him declare, whether what his gospel demands

hands of us, is not incomparably easier, more agreeable to nature, and pleasanter, as well as exceedingly more satisfactory, safer, more advantageous, and fuller of comforts, even in this world, than what sin requires of us; and whether consequently it is not less troublesome and difficult to go to Heaven, than to hurry ourselves to Hell. I carry on the thing further; let him declare, whether it is not our present, and whether it will not be our future happiness and glory, with to be under the yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he has duly considered,

First, That the taking his yoke upon us, *i. e.* our observing his commandments, contributes very much to the preserving of our health, without which we cannot be happy, had we all the riches, all the conveniencies, all the friends, all the credit, all the preferments, and all the dignities, that our hearts could desire; for the keeping our Lord's commandments drives away intemperance, which breeds many distempers, and disposes to sobriety, which preserves a good constitution, and conduces to the restoring of a bad one: it bridles and checks our unruly passions, which disorder our bodies, and renders us gentle, mild, moderate, and content; which settles in us a sweet tranquility, and helps us to keep up our health.

When he has well considered, secondly, That our obedience to his law engages us to put off our vices, as idleness, sensuality and pride, which either make us neglect our interest, or excite us to squander away our money; and that it renders us diligent, careful, prudent and laborious, and brings down upon us blessings from heaven, and consequently avails mightily to the preserving, and to the increasing of our substance, as well

A DISCOURSE concerning

as to the enjoying of it with contentment and cheerfulness.

When he has rightly considered, thirdly, That the observing Christ's precepts makes us wise
 Prov. iv. 8, 9. *Now wisdom, says the wisest of kings, shall promote us, bring us to honour, give to our head an ornament of grace, and deliver to us a crown of glory:* That it renders us just, upright, honest, good-natured, generous and bountiful, which gains us the affection and the esteem of our neighbours: That it helps us to rid ourselves of our prejudices, which draw us into many absurdities, inconveniencies and calamities, as well as to improve and to enlighten our understandings; to rule well our wills, and to direct their desires to the glory of God, to the good of our neighbours, and to our own advantage; to store our memories with comfortable notions, to renew in us the image of our Creator, to conform ourselves to his holiness; in short, to raise our nature to as great a height of perfection as our infirmities will permit it.

Finally, when he has seriously considered, That by taking the yoke of our blessed Jesus upon us, I mean, by submitting ourselves to his laws, by observing them carefully, and by following his doctrine; we get for the life to come unspeakable advantages, gain an exceedingly great reward, and obtain a most glorious kingdom; for when our souls leave this world, they shall be admitted into Paradise, an abode of unutterable bliss, where there will be no darkness, but a perpetual light; no grief, no affliction, but unexpressible joys and pleasures; no misery, but an exceedingly great happiness; no anguish, no dissatisfaction, but ineffable comforts and contentment; no war, no contention, no struggling, but a lasting peace, a good intelligence, and an admirable

mirable concord; no ignominy, no reproach, no disgrace, but honour, esteem and glory. And when our bodies rise again, God will render their union with our souls, not only everlasting, but likewise the most intimate, the pleasantest, the most agreeable, the sweetest, and the most perfect. He will be pleased to keep for ever bewixt them a wonderful liking, and admirable sympathy, a lovely correspondence, and a delightful harmony. *Then we shall hunger no more,* Rev. vii. 17. *says St John, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat, for the Lamb shall feed us, and shall lead us unto living fountains of waters: And God shall wipe all tears from our eyes, — xxi. 4. and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain.* On the contrary, we shall be blessed with a perfect satisfaction, and a glorious immortality. We shall be allowed to enrich ourselves here below with the treasures of his grace, to partake above of his eternal glory, to enjoy his supreme felicity, and to adorn our souls with his divine perfections. The love of God towards us having no bounds, the blessings and the favours he will bestow upon us for ever shall have no measure neither. He will make our bodies as perfect as it is possible for them to be, render them purer and brighter than the sun, bless our eyes with the most desirable sight of our glorious redeemer, with an eternal, most pure, and exceedingly delightful light issuing out of that wonderful sun of righteousness; our ears with a most ravishing melody, and all our other senses with all the delight, and all the pleasure they are capable of. As to our souls, God will make them by degrees as pure, as holy, as glorious, as knowing, as powerful, as happy, as the archangels and the cherubims are; render us as like himself, as the finite can be like the infinite,

nite, communicate to them as much of his perfections, as their nature can permit; enlighten their understandings, perfect their wills, sanctify their affections, and adorn their memories with most glorious notions: in short, God's power and bountifulness will never cease operating in our behalf, till they have raised us to the highest pitch of perfection our nature can reach, and made us as happy as limited beings can be.

S E C T. XII.

Objections made against the easiness or gentleness of our Lord's yoke, and the answers.

IT must then be acknowledged, that the blessed yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not only easy, agreeable to our reason, very just, fitting to our state, and most honourable, but also aiming at the general good of mankind, tending to the public and to the particular peace and tranquillity of our neighbours, exceedingly advantageous to every body, and driving both at the safety of our own persons, and at the securing of our own substance, as well as at the quieting our consciences, and at the making us happy to all eternity. It may be said, that indeed the commandments mentioned concerning the three objects of our charity, are very reasonable and not difficult to perform, but that there are several others very austere, rigorous, hard, painful and burdensome; *as to humble ourselves, to be patient in tribulation, to repent, to love our enemies, &c.* to believe things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man; and to set our affections on them, and not on things on the earth. It

James iv. 10.

1 Pet. v. 6.

Rom. xii. 12.

Matt. iii. 2.

— v. 44.

1 Cor. ii. 9.

Col. iii. 2.

positively said in the *Acts*, *That we must thro'* Acts xiv. 22.
bulation enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus
 Christ shews plainly, that it is very difficult to be
 yoked, when he says, *Strait is the gate, and nar-* Matt. vii. 14.
row is the way, which leadeth unto life; when he Luke xiv. 33.
 declares, *That whosoever does not forsake all that* 26.
he hath, and followeth not his father and mother, and
his wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea,
and his own life, cannot be his disciple; and when
 he bids us, *Deny ourselves, and take up his cross,*
and follow him; and when he requires of us, *To* Matt. xvi. 24.
lose our lives for his sake. I confess that these 25.
 things, which the gospel absolutely demands of
 us, seem, at the first sight, very hard and unrea-
 sonable, most grievous, even impracticable; but
 when they are duly weighed, they do not appear
 so at all; on the contrary, they are found to be
 very just, exceedingly profitable, most prosper-
 ous, and very feasible; which I hope to be able
 to prove evidently.

First, The gospel exacts, that we should be
 humble; now this, far from being hard, is very
 advantageous, as my reader will be sensible
 of, if he considers, first, that humility is a vir-
 tue, whereby we may become great, and perfect
 in our nature; a virtue which is the ready way to
 obtain honour and glory, one of the properest
 means to render ourselves acceptable to God, and
 an admirable expedient to get both the esteem,
 and the love of good people: a virtue which
 makes us apt to take good advice, easy to be en-
 treated, and fit to deal withal; a virtue which
 prepares those that are endued with it, to receive
 from God, with a becoming resignation, any
 event which his providence shall think fit to per-
 mit, which keeps them within their own sphere,
 and secures a favourable condescension towards
 their inferiors, a great regard for their equals,
 and

and a due submission to their superiors; a virtue which is an exact observer of peace, a perpetual preserver of order, and a strict keeper of unity. If we consider, secondly, That pride renders men fretful, peevish and captious, rash in their judgements, and severe in their censures, as well as apt to be provoked, extremely jealous of being slighted, conceited of themselves, and always discontented with the dispensations of God's providence, which disquiets their minds, disturbs their peace, and grieves their hearts, and which brings upon them, not only the contempt and the hatred of every body, but likewise the indignation and the judgement of God; *What*

James iv. 6. says St *James, resists the proud*, by asserting against them his glory, by maintaining the right of the neighbours, and by letting them know to the cost, how vain and perillous an attempt it is, to take too much upon themselves, to derogate from his honour, and to deprive their fellow creatures of the regard due to them.

Secondly, The gospel requires of us to be patient, which far from being hard, is very reasonable, and suits well our condition; for patience arms us against the mischiefs which frequently break in upon us, and helps us to overcome them. It fortifies and supports us in our afflictions, which are the remedies God often makes use of for the curing of the soul, and no less necessary to its welfare, than physic is for the health of the body. It prepares us to receive injuries without perturbation: it restrains anger and precipitation, commonly attended with many inconveniencies, and sometimes with great calamities: and when some adversity has overtaken us, that virtue enables us to bear it with evenness of mind, and persuades us to submit ourselves entirely to the appointments of God's providence, which proves a very great

great advantage to us; for God whose goodness is infinite, orders things so, *That our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; a glory with which the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared.* But impatience, far from doing good, does a great deal of harm, far from healing, exasperates; far from driving away evils, brings them in; far from alleviating, our sorrows, aggravates them; besides, impatience is exceedingly unbecoming those, who by their own fault, have brought misery upon themselves.

2 Cor. iv. 17.

Rom. viii. 18.

Thirdly, Repentance, which the Christian Religion absolutely requires, gives a great deal of trouble and pains, is attended with many difficulties and hardships, causes much sorrow and anxiety, and excites several conflicts and strugglings. Its reformations of our lives are extremely unpleasant, and its demands are very grievous. It requires of us to have a watchful eye over our actions, and especially over our failings, and to keep under our unruly passions with all the care possible, to leave off our vices, to renounce the world with all its vanities and wicked customs, and to resist manfully the temptations of the devil; to adorn our souls with Christian virtues, and to put them diligently in practice. It changes our joy into sadness, our laughter into weeping, our pleasures into vexations, our merriments into mournings, our satisfaction into discontent. It makes us to grieve and groan, and bewail, for having done what we took a great delight in doing. It engages us to frame designs against our darling passions, to deny their desires, to check and mortify them. It moves us to abhor, and to detest what we exceedingly loved, I mean, the gratifying of our vicious inclinations, and to delight

Mark ix. 46.

1 Kings xix.
11, 12.

light in and cherish that which we carefully avoided, *i. e.* the sanctification of our soul: but we must seriously consider, that repentance is a condition, without which there is no hope of salvation, and so let that condition be never so hard, we must either submit, or quit our pretensions to heaven, and resolve to be miserable. Repentance must either make up the breach which sin has made in our soul, or that poor soul shall unavoidably perish. Now I leave to your self-interest to decide which is to be preferred, either, to repent, or to lose heaven, and bring upon us damnation. I do not doubt but that self-interest, if it were consulted, would powerfully induce us to accept with joy that condition, and to perform with care what repentance demands of us; especially if we do consider, that it is very different from impenitence, which leaves behind it *a worm that dieth not*, and bitter griefs, troubles, disorder, disquiet and anguish, gnawing reproaches, piercing remorse, and a dreadful expectation; for on the contrary, repentance leaves in our soul, when it quits our body, unspeakable comforts, the assurance of God's pardon, vast hopes, an unexpressible content, a great peace and tranquility, a joy and pleasure, that may be felt but not uttered. *After the strong wind that rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks; after the earthquake and the fire, comes from God a still small voice, which assures us, that an eternity full of glory and happiness awaits us in heaven.* But after all, where is the hardship in forsaking a bad life, which we must have found by experience to carry about it much pain, sorrow, shame, and terrible stings; and which has nothing to endear itself to us, but a seeming sweetness, which is at last turned into gall, and some deceitful pleasures, which are changed into bitter griefs, and some false glory, which

which is transformed into infamy? What hardship is there in being obliged to set right our depraved affections, and our deluded judgements, to renounce a sensual, extravagant, and mischievous life, and to demean ourselves with prudence and discretion? Is it a hardship to be freed from the stings of conscience, the smart of guilt, and the fear of everlasting torments; to be recovered out of the snare of the devil, reclaimed from our ill courses, which drive us into perdition; to be made capable of the mercy of God, and brought into the way of righteousness, which leads into the abode of an eternal bliss? Is there any reason to complain of the hardships of repentance, since by it we have what is much to be preferred to all the content, and all the glory of this world, I mean, the honour and the satisfaction of causing joy in heaven; for Jesus Christ tells us in St Luke, that *there shall be joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.* I leave it to the judgement of any reasonable man, whether it is not incomparably more honourable, infinitely more satisfactory, and ten thousand times more agreeable to our self-interest, to create joy in heaven, in making, by a sincere repentance, an addition to the number of the blessed, than by continuing in our impenitency, to cause joy in hell, and become *a prey to the roaring lion, which walks about seeking whom he may devour.*

2 Tim. ii. 26.

Luke xv. 7.

1 Pet. v. 8.

Fourthly, The Christian Religion commands us, *To love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that bate us, and to pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us.* Now this precept of cherishing them that hate us, of wishing and doing good to them that imprecate us, and contrive our ruin, of beseeching God to pardon

Matt. v. 44.

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Matt. v. 45.

don them that abuse, wrong, and torment us, and to give them his grace: this precept, I say, seems to be very hard, and extremely difficult, if not impracticable. I own the performance of it is not without difficulties and obstacles, that the burden must be heavy and grievous to the flesh, and that nature is apt to kick against the spur, to revolt against injuries, and that it has need of some very powerful motives to restrain those resentments, which ill usage stirs in our breasts; but after all, if we duly consider, that it is an honourable imitation of the perfectest of all Beings, *Who makes his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sends rain on the just, and on the unjust*: if we rightly ponder what his blessed Son has done in our behalf, what glory, what happiness he left, what contempt and injuries he bore, what misery he has undergone, what ignominy and reproach he has been exposed to, what agony he has been in, and what torment, what death he has suffered for us his enemies; if we take notice of his interceding for those who daily offend him, and of his protecting, assisting, and saving them: if we observe, that to return kindness for ill treatment, right for wrong, meekness for severity, mildness for inhumanity, indulgence for oppression; that to pay a regard for disesteem, respect for scorn, and construe favourably the actions of those who make it their business to blemish our reputation, is a noble conquest over our passions, and shews a great deal of generosity, an excellent good temper, and an admirable magnanimity: if we mark, that often enemies are brought to themselves, prevailed upon to alter their deportment, and engaged to relent by lenity, good-nature, charity and gentleness; but on the contrary, that they are frequently more and more incensed and exasperated, and consequently more

trouble-

troublesome and vexatious, when we requite them in their own way, and return them evil for evil: if we reflect upon the solid satisfaction and lasting pleasure which forgiveness affords, upon the ease, comfort, and tranquility, which attends charity, and upon the disturbance, the confusion, the perplexity, the disquiet of those who let loose the reins to hatred and revenge, upon the tumultuous passions they are agitated with and tortured by, and upon the unexpressible inconveniencies, disorders and calamities that follow uncharitableness: if we seriously consider all these things, we shall find that the difficulties are not so great as we thought, and that this commandment is neither too hard nor unreasonable, but on the contrary, that it is feasible, very just, and most advantageous.

Fifthly, Religion requires of us to believe things, *which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, and to set our affections on them, and not on things on the earth.* Now where is the difficulty in believing what truth itself has told us, and what is very agreeable to reason? Where is the hardship in taking pains, in applying ourselves, in desiring vehemently to get immense goods, unspeakable blessings, vast riches, a supreme felicity, everlasting crowns, *and an eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, and with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,* has faithfully promised us, and of which he has been pleased to give us in the new covenant, the strongest assurances, as well as the most certain pledges in the Lord's Supper? Does religion demand any thing more difficult than that which sin exacts? Can it be denied but that ambition, lust and covetousness put upon us, at least, as hard tasks as religion does? Do they not make us to undergo exceeding great cares,

Tit. i. 2.

James i. 17.

to be at vast trouble, to labour under extreme difficulties, to strive as much as we can, to expose ourselves to the greatest dangers, and very often to lose our lives? And for what? Alas! for a vain glory, for transitory pleasures, for deceitful riches, and sometimes for goods entirely unknown to us; the certainty of which we have all the reason in the world to question. Do they not induce us to depend upon this world, to believe the performance of its promises, and to act accordingly, though it has frequently disappointed and deceived us? Far from being hard, it is then very reasonable, to believe the things which God has promised us, and to set our affections on them; but not at all, either to trust the world, or to give ourselves to its allurements: I add, that there are very great advantages, even in this life, in believing what the gospel requires we should believe; for Christian faith is a powerful assistance to drive away from our breasts very troublesome guests, I mean revenge, calumny, injustice and covetousness, to keep under concupiscence, to shame pride, and to restrain ambition, which are attended with a world of mischiefs. It engages us to be sincere, upright and bountiful, to perform our duties, to do worthy actions, and to perfect our nature, which is an unexpressible satisfaction, and a lasting pleasure to us; besides, it supports and comforts us in our afflictions, it removes our fears, and helps us to live quietly and contentedly. But it is quite otherwise with a worldly belief, for that breeds all the vices just now mentioned, and so debases and corrupts our nature; moreover, it is followed by a multitude of disappointments, troubles, fears and dissatisfactions: a constant experience proves what I assert.

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Sixthly, It is positively said in the *Acts*, *That we must through tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* I own, that the way to heaven is not without great difficulties, for we must as we go to that abode of bliss, struggle against the flesh, which will put us out of it, contend with the world, which presses us to submit to its ill courses, and strive against the devil, who does all he can to bring us into the way of perdition: but is there any reason for us to complain of being obliged to meet with some impediments, to be at some trouble, and to overcome some hardships, in order to enjoy perfect happiness, not only for a few years, but for ever and ever; since we do as much, and a great deal more, for momentary trifles, slippery Mammon, transient baubles, and fleeting days? Far from complaining, we should rather praise and bless God, when he thinks fit to make us partakers, for a little while, of the sufferings of his beloved Son, that we may be partakers of his unspeakable glory and happiness: far from repining at our tribulation, we should rather rejoice at it, for by brightning our faithfulness to God, and our resignation to his will, it brightens, at the same time, the eternal crown which is prepared for us in heaven: but we need not be much concerned at the consideration of these words,

1st, Because they were particularly spoken to the first Christians, surrounded by heathens, who most cruelly persecuted them, in order to bring them back to their former idolatry which they preached against with a great deal of force and a wonderful success; and which consequently they were driving away, to their inexpressible grief.

2^{dly}, Because for one elect, that suffers persecution now-a-days, there are a hundred free from it. There has always been a world of men, that

in leaving this world, are gone very peaceably into the abode of bliss.

3dly, Because suffering persecution for Jesus Christ's sake, is a peculiar favour, followed by an extraordinary degree of glory, and a singular measure of happiness, which God grants but to a few of the elect.

Seventhly, Jesus Christ shews that it is very difficult to be saved, when he says, that *strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life*; but, that *wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction*. Now why it should be concluded from hence, that the way to heaven is very rough, uneven, craggy, steep, disagreeable, and very difficult; and that, on the contrary, the way to hell is easy, smooth and pleasant, I cannot well comprehend; for may they not as well and better signify, that the way to heaven is less known, and by fewer resorted to, than the way to hell, more suitable to our corrupt nature. But after all, let us suppose, that in order to come to the possession of an immortal glory, and to the enjoyment of our supreme good, we are forced for some time to expose ourselves to many inconveniencies, to very great straits, and to abundance of difficulties; to bear the greatest storms which the malice of our enemies can raise, to cross the most frightful forests, to climb the most rugged hills which their rage can drive us to, and to travel over mountains as steep and as full of precipices as they can find; and that, on the contrary, the way to perdition, and to great torments, is fine, charming, strewed with flowers, and full of delights. I ask, which of these two ways is to be preferred? I dare answer, That there is no man of any sense and reason, but would rather choose to go to a place full of blessings, of lawful pleasures, and innocent diversions, in

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tempestuous weather, and through a rugged way, than to a place full of misery, trouble, pain and anguish, in a clear sun-shiny day, and through a smooth, pleasant road.

Eighthly, Jesus Christ, the Author of our Religion, requires of us to forsake all that we have, and to hate our fathers and mothers, and wives, and children, and brethren, and sisters, to deny ourselves, to take up his cross and to follow him, even to lose our lives for his sake. There lies the grand objection, but my reader will be convinced, that these commandments, far from being hard, too severe, and unjust, offensive and prejudicial to our welfare; are, on the contrary, kind, reasonable, and very advantageous; if we do but consider, without prejudice or partiality, that it is a maxim received all over the world, and a practice that has universally obtained in all nations, to part with a small advantage, in prospect of getting a much greater one: now our blessed Lord demands of us, *To forsake all that we have*, i. e. to leave by choice the poor conveniencies, and the sorry advantages of this life, which we must otherwise part with by constraint. But why will he have us forsake these baubles? That we may be partakers of the unspeakable felicity of heaven, get eternal crowns, and possess inexhaustible treasures. He expects that we shall hate, i. e. love less than him, our parents, and our nearest relations, and that we shall go from them, and even break the strongest ties of kindred and friendship, whenever his service and his glory require it; *That we shall deny ourselves*, i. e. renounce our carnal mind, which is contrary to his holy will, keep our self-love from favouring our desires, which are repugnant to his commandments, curb our unruly passions, neglect our greatest concerns, for the good of his religion, and hinder the

love of ease from sparing ourselves, when his gospel demands our labours. He expects that we shall bear willingly the greatest hardships, expose ourselves to the most imminent dangers, stand out the violence of the sharpest persecutions, and even suffer a cruel death for his sake. But why does he expect such things?

Col. ii. 3.

1st, Because he is the author of our being, the giver of all our faculties, the disposer of all the advantages we are possessed of, the fountain of all the blessings we enjoy, the origin of all the virtues we are endowed with; *for in him*, says St Paul, *are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*. He is the preserver of our life, the cleanser of our heart, the Saviour of our soul, the vanquisher of our implacable enemies, the pacifier of God's dreadful justice, the powerful intercessor that obtains the pardon of our sins, and the assistance of the holy Spirit; by whom our faith is strengthened, our charity increased, and our sanctification wrought. Besides, he is our king, our governor, our head, our brother; *and we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*; he supports us in all dangers, and he carries us through all temptations.

Eph. v. 30.

2^{dly}, Because the love of our parents, of our nearest relations, and of our best friends, is infinitely below the love of Jesus Christ, who having loved us first, is come down from heaven in great humility, and has taken our nature with all its innocent infirmities, that he might teach us the mysteries of our salvation, and offer himself up in sacrifice, in order to deliver us from an everlasting misery, and to purchase unto us the right to a glorious immortality. Now which of our kindred and friends would make himself poor to make us rich, bear the greatest affronts, and suffer all manner of injuries, to procure us much honour

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honour and glory, *bumble himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, to raise and perfect our nature, and to make us live happily? Which of them would expose himself to the dreadful wrath of God, to shelter us from it? None, none would do such things for us; wherefore we must love them all less than our dear Lord Jesus Christ, otherwise we cannot be his disciples, nor partake of his glory.

3dly, Because he is the supreme judge of the world, in whose *power are the keys of hell and death*, as likewise, *the keys of heaven, and of eternal life*: who needs but say the word, and we shall be either plunged into an endless misery, or made partakers of a most happy and glorious eternity: it may be added, that being infinitely above all, in dignity, in power, and in goodness; if he be not preferred to all, a most grievous affront is put upon him, which he will resent in a most dreadful manner.

4thly, Because whenever he requires of us to sacrifice our lives, and we acquiesce to his will, he gives us instead of a frail, short, uneasy and mortal life, subject to a world of infirmities, liable to all manner of evils, full of guilt and corruption, of fears and perplexities; he gives us, I say, instead of it, a permanent, easy, uncorruptible and everlasting life, free from all vices, and consequently from all misery, sorrow, pain and affliction; on the contrary, full of purity and holiness; of pleasures, joy and content: wherefore we are not to wonder, if the martyrs ran to the most barbarous deaths with hearts full of cheerfulness; for being convinced of the fulfilling of our blessed Lord's promises, *That he who loses his life for his sake, shall find it*; *That whosoever shall lose his life, shall preserve it*; and, *That he who hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal*;

Phil. ii. 8.

Rev. i. 18.

Matt. x. 39.

Luke xvii. 33.

John xii. 25.

Acts i. 3.

eternal; being, I say, convinced of the performance of these promises, what could they do more advantageous to themselves, than to part with a wretched and very short life, for a most glorious and eternal one. A self unprejudiced love, that has any insight into *things which pertain to the kingdom of God*, into the glory and happiness of those, that are faithful to Jesus Christ to their life's end; will powerfully induce us to imitate the martyrs, whenever our holy religion requires that we should suffer and die. If we did but leave off our prejudices, and listen to reason, and consult our self-interest, we should find, that it is infinitely better and more prudent, to sacrifice the remainder of a cloudy and very short life, full of sorrows, continually exposed to the most grievous accidents, and that decays sensibly, for the glory and the service of our blessed Lord, in whose power it is, after our bodies have been reduced to dust, to make them partakers of a glorious resurrection, and withal, to raise our souls to the highest perfection their nature is capable of, and to bless us with an eternity of happiness; we should find, that it is infinitely better and more prudent to sacrifice the remainder of such a life, than to take up with a bare possibility of prolonging it, which every moment may prove its end; at the hazard of losing his most valuable favour, and of incurring his dreadful indignation; at the risque of bringing upon us unexpressible and irrecoverable mischiefs, at the expence of the everlasting welfare of our precious souls, of the inexhaustible treasures of heaven, and of an eternity of joy, pleasure and glory.

Job v. 7.

I add to these reasons, which, I think, powerfully induce us to submit to the yoke of Jesus Christ, this, *That man being born to trouble*, says Job, *as the sparks fly upward*; the question is

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is not, whether we will suffer or no, (for suffer we must, let our circumstances be what they will) but, whether we had rather endure misery, pain, grief and affliction in the cause of sin, and in the service of our inordinate passions, than in the cause of righteousness, and in the service of our blessed Lord; and so, whether we will become the slaves of vice, which will rack us in this world, and torment us in the next; or whether we choose to be the servants of Jesus Christ, whose infinite goodness will assist, comfort, and bless us in this life, and make us partakers of a most happy and glorious eternity in the life to come: whether in spite of the checks, the reproaches, and the stings of our consciences, we will gratify our lust, our avarice, our pride and ambition; or whether in order to have a contented mind, we will rather chuse to be at the trouble of mortifying our flesh, and of restraining our evil inclinations: whether we will prefer to the working out the salvation of our immortal souls, the pampering of our wretched bodies, which are to day acting upon the surface of the earth, and perhaps to morrow they shall be only fit to be laid within it; finally, whether we will die in our vices, and so be miserable in the next world; or end our life in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so be admitted into heaven, the abode of an eternal bliss.

SECT.

S E C T. XIII.

What sin exacts for its pleasures and goods, compared with what religion requires for its blessings and advantages.

NOW I appeal to any man of sense and reason, that will seriously reflect upon the two yokes spoken of, whether those things which Jesus Christ requires of us, and which are looked upon as so hard, so unreasonable, so grievous, even impracticable, are not very just, exceedingly profitable, most happy, and very feasible. But to be more and more convinced, that the yoke of Jesus Christ is easy, and his empire mild, that his laws are very advantageous, and the duties he enjoins us most reasonable; I desire, that what sin, or the old man, exacts for its transient pleasures, and its frivolous goods, may be compared with what religion requires for its most excellent blessings, and its inexpressible advantages, and that the consequences of the one and of the other may be set together; afterwards I do not question, but it will evidently appear, that the things which Jesus Christ expects of us, are not only less painful, hard and hazardous, but likewise more satisfactory, and infinitely more profitable than those which sin demands of us. Now religion will have us repent of our sins, believe its truths, curb our passions, forgive our enemies, and suffer many evils; forsake all, expose our life to great dangers, and even lose it, if either the promoting of God's glory, and the increase of our redeemer's kingdom require it. It forbids the unlawful pleasures, but it permits the innocent ones. Now, what do we get here below by submitting

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to what religion requires of us? A contented mind, a peaceable conscience, and well grounded hopes of an eternal, exceeding happy, and most glorious life. What else? The grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the holy Ghost, whereby our happiness shall be perfected and everlasting.

Sin, or the old man, will likewise have us repent of several of our actions, and believe a world of falsehoods, that either belong to Mammon, or respect either his own nature, or his advantages, or his pleasures. It will have us restrain our passions, and dissemble our resentments. It makes us run into a multitude of troubles, sorrows and mischiefs; it induces us to leave our nearest relations, and our most intimate friends for lucre's sake; as well as to part with an easy, quiet, sweet, and pleasant life, in order to gratify either our avarice, or our ambition. It exposes us to imminent dangers, and brings upon us infamous and lamentable deaths. It frequently keeps us not only from enjoying unlawful, but also innocent pleasures. I appeal to the consciences of proud, envious, covetous, ambitious, unjust and lascivious men, whether what I assert is not true. Now, what do they get? Pleasures. But what pleasures? Alas! transient, very transient ones, which are attended with bitterness, grief, and perplexity. What else? The gratifying for a very little while, violent and unruly passions, that hurry them into a world of mischiefs, till they pass from time into eternity. What do they get then? Alas! nothing but woes, endless woes!

Now let my reader judge, whether the troubles, the cares, and the labours which religion requires, are not less hard and difficult than those which sin demands, and much more honourable:
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but though they should be as full of difficulties, why should we refuse to submit to them, since the advantages of religion are incomparably greater and worthier than the advantages of sin? If the gospel does not require greater hardships than sin, and if as great endeavours as those we use to gratify either covetousness, or pride, or envy, or ambition, or concupiscence, are sufficient to get to heaven, what cause, I beseech you, have we to complain? Oh! did we but take as much care and pains for the salvation of our precious souls, as we do for the welfare of our vile bodies: Were we but as solicitous for a glorious immortality, as we are for a mortal life: Had we but as vehement desires for the inexhaustible treasures of heaven, as we have for the perishable riches of the earth: If we would but support the incumbrances and the difficulties which our flesh, the world, and the devil throw in the way of religion, with the same patience and steadiness, as we bear the fatigues, the inconveniencies, and the hardships of a journey, or a voyage: Were we but resolved to shun ill company as circumspectly as we avoid great dangers; and to withstand the temptations of the enemies of our salvation, with as much vigour as we resist them who would engage us to do things contrary to our worldly interest: I dare assert, that we should discharge the duties which religion requires of us, and so, that our hopes of heaven should be incomparably better grounded, than all the expectations we can have in this world. Now let any impartial and unprejudiced man judge, whether the advantage is not in all respects on the side of our blessed Lord's yoke; whether it is not an easy matter to shew to those, who under the pretence of the difficulties and the hardships of religion, do neglect what

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what it requires, and give themselves over to a bad life, that they really take more pains, and are at greater trouble to come to ruin, than is required to work out their salvation, and that they could gain heaven with less uneasiness, inconveniences and labours, than they go to hell. I refer it to him, whether there is any reason to be startled at a good life, because of the great watchfulness, diligence, cares and pains it requires, since a wicked one exacts a great deal more; and whether he that walks in a rough, uneven way, that is upon the brink of a precipice, may say with any appearance of reason, that he cannot walk in the smooth paths of righteousness, *and run the race* Heb. xii. 1. *which is set before him*, wherein there are great afflictions, many comforts, abundance of satisfaction, and at the end of it, eternal happiness.

S E C T. XIV.

Another objection concerning our inability of performing the evangelical precepts; the answer to it, and the conclusion of this discourse.

THIS other objection may be made, that indeed the yoke of Jesus Christ is neither uneasy nor hard, nor heavy in itself, but that it is only so by accident; that the Christian Religion is really very agreeable to reason, and accommodated to our interest. We could easily, and would chearfully do what it requires of us, were we but like our first parents, in their state of innocence, before they had eaten of the forbidden fruit. But alas! far from being pure and innocent, our nature is very much corrupted, we
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are exceedingly inclined to evil; we are fallen into sin, which has weakened so much our reason, that it has little or no strength, and is incapable to resist the violence of our passions, which drive us from *the paths of our Lord's commandments, which are the paths of life, into the crooked ways of darkness, which are the ways of death.*

Psal. cxix.

36.

— xvi. 11.

Prov. ii. 13, 15.

— xv. 14, 12.

Besides, the powerful enemies of our salvation that are within and without us, make use of all their engines, and of all their subtilty, to induce us to do evil, to take upon us the yoke of sin, and to gratify our inborn wicked inclinations: but in order to clear this difficulty, I desire my reader to consider, that this discourse regards Christians redeemed out of the power of sin, of the devil, and the world; translated into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and made capable, by the assistance of the holy Spirit, *to hinder sin from reigning in their mortal body; to wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. And to obey from the heart that form of doctrine which has been delivered us.* It is too well known, that we are not able of ourselves so much as to have good thoughts, and entertain holy desires; but it is likewise well known, to our great comfort, that we are not left to ourselves, and that Jesus Christ supports, assists, and strengthens us by his Spirit: *For we are filled, says St Paul, with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering, with joyfulness giving thanks unto the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance*

Col. ii. 3.

Rom. vi. 12.

Eph. vi. 12.

Rom. vi. 17.

Col. i. 9, 10,

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stance of the saints in light. It is well known, that God worketh in us both to will and to do of Phil. ii. 13. is good pleasure; That Jesus Christ is the way John iv. 6. leading us to the truth which helps us to life; and that our being liable to fall into sin, is remedied by repentance, our imperfect holiness supplied by the merit of our blessed Lord, and our defective obedience to God's commandments made up by his perfect righteousness and powerful intercession. Thus it plainly appears, that the yoke of Jesus Christ is not only easy, but likewise attended with all the encouragement, and all the assistances, which can reasonably be desired; wherefore let us take upon ourselves, with cheerfulness, that blessed yoke, and bear it contentedly, even with the greatest joy; for in truth it is the only way to find rest unto our souls, to have a settled mind, and a peaceable conscience, to enjoy a life full of comforts, and to obtain, when we leave this world, a glorious immortality.

Now to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, whose yoke is easy and burden light, *Be blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever. Rev. vii. 12.*
Amen.

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